

CHAPTER 6. FLOTILLA CORRESPONDENCE

A. Introduction

1. Standards -- This guide provides the Flotilla Commander and staff with:

- a. Guidelines and suggestions for improving or sharpening writing skills;
- b. Formats for basic Flotilla correspondence.

It is not intended to cover all things for all people but only to provide the basics for the Flotilla's mission.

2. Principles for good writing. Three things you should know when you start a written communication are your recipient, your subject, and yourself.
 - a. There are various ways to communicate your feelings. The method you use will depend on the recipient. A letter to the Division Captain, the District Commodore or the DIRAUX will be different than the letter welcoming a new member. One will be direct, formal and to the point. The new member letter will be more informal and personal.
 - b. Know what you are writing about and convey that knowledge to the recipient by making sure you provide complete information on the subject being addressed. It is a great idea to write the correspondence and then put it aside for a while. Pick it up later and read it as if you were the receiver. If you have the slightest doubt about what is being said, you can bet the receiver will have even more trouble.
 - c. Know your own strengths and weaknesses. Build on your strengths and get assistance with your weaknesses. Never be afraid to ask for assistance to improve the product.
3. Getting ready to write. Some ideas to consider during the writing of a letter are:
 - a. Gather the information you need to get your point across and reacquaint yourself with the facts. Check references such as the AUXMAN, the Flotilla Procedures Manual, and other sources that you may need to make yourself knowledgeable. It is amazing how fast you can become an expert by reading the books. Some people don't check the current facts but rely on how it was done last year or what someone else told them. Sometimes this information is neither correct nor reliable. The Auxiliary Web Site (<http://www.cgaux.org>) is an excellent source for recent changes. Putting questionable information in a letter to a knowledgeable individual will normally kill any chances of success.
 - b. After the confirmation of information (know your subject), make a written or mental outline of how you want to present the subject to the recipient. (Know the receiver)

Your presentation may vary by recipient. The approach should seem logical and reasonable to the individual receiving the letter. Put yourself in the recipient's shoes and then sell yourself.

- c. Use your outline and write a draft covering all the main points. Don't worry about the spelling and grammar at this point. Get your ideas on paper. It is always easier to correct that 'first draft' than it is to keep correcting thoughts in your mind.
- d. Let the draft rest. Put it out of sight and go to other things. This rest is a very important part of the project. It gives you time to back off, rest and think about the matter. Great! Now changes will be easier and the overall approach is clearer. Would you believe that most unsuccessful writers ignore this step?
- e. Final revisions. You may make several drafts before being satisfied. Correct the spelling and format in the last draft. When possible have someone else read the correspondence and ask for comments. If they understand it on the first reading, you have a very good document.

B. Formats

- 1. There are four formats that the flotilla may use to communicate with individuals or organizations inside or outside the Auxiliary. These are:
 - a. FROM: - TO: - VIA: - SUBJECT: Letter..
 - b. RapidDraft Letter.
 - c. Simple Business Letter.
 - d. Postcards.
- 2. The FROM: - TO: - VIA: - SUBJECT: Letter -- Easy to format, does not require inside addresses and simplifies coordination. It is a very acceptable style for most Auxiliary correspondence. The VIA: portion is utilized when the correspondence must pass through several layers in the Chain of Communication. In this case, the intermediate addresses may comment (endorse) on the subject/content of the letter if they so wish. However, they must forward the correspondence as soon as possible. The VIA: process must not be used to sidetrack or otherwise delay correspondence for any reason. The staff letter of appointment used in Ch. 5 is a FROM: - TO: - SUBJECT: Letter.
 - a. The advantage of the VIA portion is that the individuals involved may concur with the letter by simply writing 'concur' after their name, add their initials and pass it to the next individual. If the individual wants to add remarks or does not concur they can do so by attaching their comments to the letter and sending it to the next person. List the first person to comment at the top of the list and the others in order.

b. Example as follows:

LETTERHEAD

(If no preprinted letterhead is used you may want to type one.)

Office of the Flotilla Commander

Flotilla 99-10

Auxiliary Village, MW, 90909

DATE. _____

FROM: Your Name, Auxiliary Acronym (i.e., FC- <flotilla number>)

TO: _____ *Identifies the ultimate recipient*

VIA: If letter requires concurrence or remarks by someone between the sender and the recipient those names and/or position designations are filled in here. Complete addresses are not used i.e.

VIA: DCP-15

or

VIA: DCP-15

DCO 80th Western

SUBJECT: STAFF OFFICER APPOINTMENT *Subject states the purpose of the letter. All letters in the subject line are capitalized.*

1. I appoint you the Flotilla _____ Officer (FSO--____)
This appointment is authorized by The Auxiliary Manual, COMDTINST M16790.1 (Series),

////////////////////////////////////
8. I am looking forward to your valuable contribution toward an excellent year for this Flotilla.

Your Name
Flotilla Commander

cc: individual file

3. The RapidDraft Letter — Is a fast and uncomplicated way to communicate. It can be typed or handwritten. Use for routine correspondence not requiring action, review, or comment by intermediate addressees. If there is room the recipient may write the answer on the RapidDraft and return it to the sender. The yellow copy is the file copy for the originator. If the receiver replies on the same form, the blue copy is used as the receivers file copy. An example of the RapidDraft is shown in Auxiliary Forms and Instructions (COMDTINST 16790.2 (series)) which was sent to all Auxiliary members. RapidDrafts may be ordered from ANSC by the FSO-MA or the Flotilla Commander.

4. The business letter -- Is a format to use when writing to persons or organizations outside the Auxiliary. The annotated example below is a guide for this type of letter.

LETTERHEAD

<2 spaces>

Date

<4 spaces>

Mr. C.W. Busniss

<Inside address that letter is being mailed to>

943 Third Street

Auxil, MO 12345-3268

<space>

SUBJECT: (ALL CAPITALS)

<space>

REFERENCE(S): (Lettered, starting with "a." Use normal capitalization/lower case practice.)

<space>

Dear Mr. Busniss:

<space>

This is to confirm our telephone conversation of Feb. 16. We are pleased to present a 30 minute talk on Boating Safety to your Lions Club at the Wagon Wheel Cafe on Wednesday, March 5th.

<space>

We will need a table for our slide projector. Since you already have a screen in the meeting room we will use your screen. Our talk will address subjects of water safety for boaters and for those who occasionally ride on or rent a boat. The presentation will take about 20 min. This will leave 10 min. for a very important question and answer session.

<space>

Flotilla 71-97 is pleased to work with you in the important matter of Safe Boating. If there are any changes or questions please give me a call at 987-5432.

<space>

Sincerely,

<three spaces>

James R. Rooter

Auxiliary title spelled out

U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary

<space>

ENCL: Boating Safety Pamphlet *(If there are any enclosures they are listed here).*

Copy: Duane Smith DCP 71 *(If copies are sent to anyone they are listed here).*

(Another style of business letter is a block style in which the paragraphs are not indented and the signature block is aligned on the left margin.)

5. The postcard – Postcards are available through the FSO-MA. Use them when the message is short. They are good to announce meetings, member training sessions, BS&S class reminders, etc. Another benefit is that they also save on postage and envelope costs.
6. Informal Communications – In e-mails, notes, handwritten replies to letters, and other such informal communications no closure statement (e.g. “yours truly”, “your friend”, or “sincerely”) is required. However, naval tradition has indicated that if the writer desires to use a closure statement, the closure “very respectfully” or “respectfully” is appropriate. “Very respectfully” is used when communicating junior to senior and “respectfully” is appropriate when communicating senior to junior.

